Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 03614 01 OF 02 231345Z
ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00
INR-05 CIAE-00 SP-02 L-01 PRS-01 INRE-00 SSM-01
IO-06 /043 W
----------231421Z 005708 /43
O R 231222Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6274
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 3614

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS
SUBJECT: BEGIN'S VIEWS ON THE ELECTION, THEN NEW GOVERNMENT, AND
RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

SUMMARY: DURING A THREE HOUR DISCUSSION OVER LUNCH MAY 22, I EXPLORED WITH MENACHEM BEGIN HIS VIEWS OF HIS RECENT SUCCESS AND OF THE PROBLEMS AHEAD FOR HIMSELF AND ISRAEL. HE WAS SURPRISED BY SIZE OF THE VICTORY, BUT PLANS TO MOVE QUICKLY AND DECISIVELY ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES. (HIS RE-HOSPITALIZATION LATER THAT EVENING COULD SERIOUSLY HINDER HIS PLANS.) END SUMMARY.

1. BEGIN AND I TALKED PRIVATELY AT PAO'S HOME IN LENGTHY, INFORMAL, FIRENDLY "GET ACQUAINTED" SESSION. HIS VIEWS ON MANY DIVERSE TOPICS SUMMARIZED BELOW.

2. GOVERNMENT FORMATION. BEGIN DOES NOT ANTICIPATE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 03614 01 OF 02 231345Z

DIFFICULTY IN FORMING A GOVERNMENT BY END OF JUNE, BUT ONE CAN NEVER ANTICIPATE ALL THE PROBLEMS WHICH MAY ARISE, PARTICULAULY AS OTHER PARTIES RE-FORM AND PLAN NEW STRATEGIES IN DEALING WITH THE LIKUD. BEGIN ALREADY HAS ENOUGH SEATS WITH THE INCLUSION OF THE NRP AND SOME OF THE SMALLER PARTIES TO FORM GOVERNMENT. HE MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:
--DOES NOT BELIEVE IT POSSIBLE TO BRING IN LABOR PARTY.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT IF THEY JOIN GOVERNMENT, PARTY WILL FRAGMENT.
--HOPES DMC WILL JOIN, BUT THEY LOCKED THEMSELVES IN PREMATURELY TO THEIR "SEVEN CONDITIONS". OF THE SEVEN, HE SEEMS MOST WORRIED ONLY ABOUT THE TWO YEAR DEADLINE FOR NEW ELECTIONS--WHICH HE WILL NEVER ACCEPT. IS CONFICENT THE FOREIGN POLICY DIFFERENCE CAN BE PAPERED OVER, AT LEAST AT START. BELIEVES HE CAN WORK WITH YADIN BECAUSE THEY ARE GOOD FRIENDS WHO "HAVE SHARED QUITE A BIT TOGETHER". LIKUD AND DMC MEETING TUESDAY TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS. YADIN MENTIONED TO BEGIN THAT HE WOULD NEED TO BRING FOUR OF HIS PEOPLE TO MEETING ALTHOUGH BEGIN SAID HAD INTENDED TO HAVE JUST ONE OTHER FROM LIKUD. LATER YADIN SAID HE NEEDED TO ADD ANOTHER FROM DMC. BEGIN MENTIONED THIS TO ILLUSTRATE DMC'S INTERNAL PROBLEM OF DEALING WITH THE VARIOUS CONFLICTING FACTIONS.
--NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY WILL DEFINITELY JOIN COALITION. BEGIN BELIEVES THIS TIE BETWEEN LIKUD AND NRP TO BE VERY IMPORTANT. THINKS ZVULUN HAMMER OF THE NRP WILL BECOME MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND JOSEF BURG WILL BE MINISTER OF INTERIOR.
--BEGIN SAID IF HE HAD TO, HE WOULD FORM GOVERNMENT WITH MINIMUM NUMBER OF SEATS AND LEAVE OPENING FOR OTHERS TO JOIN AT A LATER DATE.
--HE THOUGHT PRESIDENT KATZIR WOULD ASK HIM TO FORM A GOVERNMENT AS EARLY AS MAY 26, SINCE FINAL OFFICIAL RESULTS ARE TO BE ANNOUNCED MAY 24. FELT HE COULD ACCOMPLISH HIS TASK WITHIN THE PRESCRIBED 21 DAYS, BUT ONE NEVER CAN FORESEE THE VICISSITUDES IN POLITICS AND HE MIGHT NEED AN EXTENSION
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 03614 01 OF 02 231345Z

(ALLOWED MAXIMUM ADDITIONAL 21 DAYS).
--CONSIDERS FLATTO SHARON A POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT, EVEN THOUGH HE HIMSELF DRAFTED AND SIGNED PETITION TO PREVENT SHARON'S EXTRADITION TO FRANCE IN RETALIATION TO THE RELEASE OF ABOU DAOUD. WOULD NOT ACCEPT HIM IN COALITION.
--ONE SMALLER RELIGIOUS PARTY MIGHT REFUSE JOIN COALITION BECAUSE OF THEIR OBJECTION TO CONSCRIPTION OF GIRL SOLDIERS. HE WILL NOT YIELD ON THIS POINT TO THEM. BEGIN FEELS STRONGLY THAT ALL ISRAELI GIRLS WHOULD HAVE ARMY TRAINING INCLUDING WEAPONS TRAINING, BUT SHOULD NOT SERVE IN COMBAT UNITS.

3. CABINET ASSIGNMENTS: BEGIN MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE TOP THREE CABINET POSTS WOULD REMAIN WITH THE LIKUD AND WERE NOT NEGOTIABLE. HE CONFIRMED THAT EZER WEIZMANN WOULD BE GIVEN THE PORTFOLIO OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE. WHEN ASKED ABOUT REPORT THAT DULZIN'S NAME HAD BEEN MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE CANDIDATE FOR MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BEGIN SAID THAT "DULZIN HAD NOT DISCUSSED HIS PLANS." HOWEVER, SINCE ALMOGI IS RESIGNING HIS POSITION AS HEAD OF THE

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

JEWISH AGENCY, DULZIN IS LOGICAL SUCCESSOR. HEADING THE
JEWISH AGENCY BEGIN CONSIDERS AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN MOST MINISTRIES.
(CLEAR IMPLICATION WAS THAT FORNMIN WOULD GO
TO SOMEONE ELSE, THOUGH THE AVOIDED SAYING WHO. SELECTION
OF ARENS FOR MISSION TO U.S. MAY BE SUGESTIVE.)

4. BEGIN MENTIONED POSSIBILITY THAT IF DMC JOINS THE
GOVERNMENT, YADIN MIGHT BE OFFERED POST OF DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTER, ALTHOUGH BEGIN VIEWS IT AS MEANINGLESS POSITION.
SINCE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE IF GOING TO WEIZMANN, ARIK SHARON
WILL BE OFFERED JOB OF HEADING INTERNAL SECURITY. BEGIN SAID
SHARON IS "ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT MILITARY STRATIGISTS IN
WORLD TODAY", BUT MADE SOME UNFORTUNATE POLITICAL BLUNDERS--
PARTICULARLY WHEN SHARON LEFT KNESSET AND JOINED RABIN AS
HIS MILITARY ADVISOR.

5. ELECTION: BEGIN SIAD HE WAS SURPRISED BY THE EXTENT OF
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 TEL AV 03614 01 OF 02 231345Z

POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE LIKUD. HE EXPECTED TO DO WELL,
BUT HE NEVER DREAMED LABOR WOULD LOSE SO HEAVILY. HE
ATTRIBUTED THIS TO A NUMBER OF FACTORS, PRIMARILY THE DESIRE
FOR CHANGE AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF LABOR PARTY DOMINATION.
THE ALIGNMENT USED SOME RATHER VICIOUS PROPAGANDE DURING
THE CAMPAIGN TO FRIGHTEN THE ELECTORATE--EQUATING LIKUD
WITH THE NAZIS, FOR EXAMPLE. BEGIN THOUGHT THIS WAS A
TACTICAL ERROR BY THE LABOR PARTY BECAUSE ISRAELIS REACT
ANGRILY TO THIS KINK OF APPROACH. DOMESTIC ISSUES WERE
THE MAJOR FACTOR IN THE ELECTION--PEOPLE ANXIOUS FOR CHANGE,
TIRED OF SAME GOVERNMENT IN POWER FOR 30 YEARS, AND CONCERN
ABOUT INCREASING INFLATION AND LABOR UNREST. HOWEVER, HE
ALSO STRESSED DELAYED IMPACT OF 1973 WAR AND POPULAR
DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE LABOR ASTABLISHMENT'S HANDLING
OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS.

6. BEGIN SIAD DMC HAD HOPED TO GAIN SUFFICIENT SEATS TO BE
ESSENTIAL TO EITHER MAJOR PARTY'S COALITION HOPES. THIS
DIDN'T HAPPEN, ALTHOUGH RUBENSTEIN WAS SO CONFIDENT HE HAD
REFERRED BEFORE THE ELECTION TO THE ALIGNMENT AND LIKUD
AS DMC POTENTIAL JUNIOR PARTNERS* BEGIN SAID THE DMC, AS A
NEW AND INEXPERIENCED POLITICAL PARTY, HAS AN ABUNDANCE OF
PORBLEMS AS TO HOW THEY WILL FUNCTION IN CONSENT SITUATION.
THE RAKAH (COMMUNIST) PARTY WAS DISAPPOINTED; THEY THOUGHT
THEY WOULD GET 2 OR 3 MORE SEATS THAN THEY DID. BEGIN
COULDN'T TELL TO WHOM THE VOTES MIGHT HAVE GONE.

7. AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS WERE CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY
THE LIKUD VICTORY, BUT HE HAS RECEIVED MESSAGES WHICH
INDICATE THEIR GENERAL SUPPORT. HE REGARDS RABBI SCHINDLER
AS A VERY DECENT, INTELLIGENT PERSON; HE WILL BE COMING TO

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

ISRAEL THIS WEEK TO MEET WITH BEGIN.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 03614 02 OF 02 231408Z
ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00
INR-05 CIAE-00 SP-02 L-01 PRS-01 INRE-00 SSM-01
IO-06 /043 W
----------231421Z 005976 /44
O R 231222Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6275
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 3614

LIMDIS

8. RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. BEGIN DID NOT DISCUSS HIS VIEWS OF U.S./ISRAELI RELATIONS EXCEPT IN BROAD TERMS AND ID DID NOT PRESS HIM ON THIS OCCASION OF OUR FIRST MEETING. I DID OF COURSE UNDERSCORE RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENT CARTER ON OUR DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO MOVE TOWARD ME NEGOTIATIONS, AND ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS. I SAID I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT EFFECTS OF ISRAELI PRESS REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON, WHICH TENDED TO COMPLICATE ISSUES BY MAGNIFYING AND DRAMATIZING POTENTIAL DIFFERENCE ON SUBJECTS NOT YET CLEARLY RESOLVED IN WASHINGTON. HE SAID HE AGREED, AND ACCEPTED GRATEFULLY MY SUGGESTION THAT HE NOT ASSUME ISRAELI PRESS WAS CONVEYING ACCURATELY U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY. I ASKED THAT HE WAIT TO HEAR IT FROM ME OR FROM THE DEPARTMENT; HE ASSURED ME HE WOULD.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

9. BEGIN IS CONFIDENT THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO VISIT PRESIDENT CARTER EARLY IN JULY, AND HE LOOKS FORWARD EAGERLY TO THAT VISIT. HE SIAD HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE RABIN VISIT TO WASHINGTON HAD NOT BEEN A SUCCESS. BEGIN IS SENDING A LIKUD TEAM TO WASHINGTON ON MAY 26 TO CORRECT FALSE IMPRESSIONS OF HIS OWN BACKGROUND AND VIEWS AND THOSE OF HIS PARTY. HE SAID PROFESSOR MOSHE ARENS AND SHMUEL KATZ WOULD BE THE LEADING MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP.

10. MIDDLE EAST: BEGIN SAID HE WANTS PEACE, BUT NOT THE KIND DESCRIBED BY SADAT OR ASSAD--BEGIN WANTS EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS, TRADE, ETC. HE BELIEVES HUSSEIN READY FOR PEACE WITH ISRAEL. BEGIN SAID HE IS CONVINCED THAT IF THE ARABS ATTACK, ISRAEL WOULD HAVE NO DIFFICULTY IN HANDLING THE TRREAT. HE AGREED WITH CHIEF OF STAFF GUR THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE ABLE TO PROTECT ITSELF FOR THE NEXT 5 TO 10 YEARS.

1. SHYING AWAY FROM MUCH DISCUSSION OF THE OCCUPITED TERRITORIES, BEGIN DID
QUIETLY RESTATE HIS NOW FAMILIAR POSITION THAT JEWS MUST BE ABLE TO SETTLE ANYWHERE IN THEIR HISTORIC LAND. WITH RESPECT TO HIS VISIT AND SPEECH AT KADDUM, HE STRESSED THE DEEP RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF ANY CEREMONY INVOLVING A DEDICATION OF THE TORAH SCROLL. ANY TIME HE WERE ASKED TO TAKE PART, HE WOULD DO SO UNHESITATINGLY. HE INSISTED THAT HIS POLICIES REGARDING THE WEST BANK ARE ESSENTIALLY THOSE OF EVERY POLITICAL PARTY IN ISRAEL EXCEPT THE COMMUNISTS. EVEN THE ALIGNEMENT WAS COMMITTED TO GO TO A REFERENDUM IF THIS ISSUE WERE TREATED IN THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

12. ASSORTED STATEMENTS: --HIS GOVERNMENT HAD MUCH TO DO AND HE EXPECTED HIS PEOPLE TO PUT IN LONG HOURS. WITHIN LIKUD, UNITY IS NOW VERY GOOD--IN CONTRAST TO SITUATION
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

THREE TO FIVE YEARS AGO. BEGIN SAID LIKUD WAS PUSHING YOUNGER PEOPLE IN THE PARTY. HE HIMSLEF PLANNED TO GIVE FIVE OR SIX MORE YEARS AT MOST TO PUBLIC LIFE, THEN RETIRE TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT THE TRAGIC EXPERIENCES OF HIS GENERATION.
--ANXIOUS TO ESTABLISH A QUORUM SYSTEM IN KNESSET. DOESN'T WANT KNESSET WITH JUST A FEW MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE. WANTS QUESTION PERIOD--LIKE THE BRITISH PATTERN--THINKS THIS IS HEALTHY FOR BOTH KNESSET AND THE GOVERNMENT.
--SAID HE WANTS A SERIOUS INVESTIGATION MADE OF WHY 10 PERCENT

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

OF ISRAELI HAVE EMIGRATED. SAID HE BELIEVES IT WAS PRIMARILY LOSS OF MORALE AFTER YOM KIPPUR WAR. WISHES TO CORRECT CONDITIONS WITHIN COUNTRY SO THIS TREND WOULD NOT CONTINUE. ISRAELIS STILL NOT OVER EFFECTS OF YOM KIPPUR WAR.
--IN ADDITION TO UTILIZING PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, HE INTENDS TO USE OFFICE AT KNESSET PART OF WEEK TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS THAN PREVIOUS PRIME MINISTERS.
--CONSIDERING A MINISTRY OF INFORMATION HEADED BY KATZ.
--CONCERNED ABOUT THE GROWING POWER OF THE HISTRADRUT. INDICATED THAT EVEN IN THE U.S., WHERE LABOR UNIONS WERE VERY STRONG ORGANIZATIONALLY, THEY DON'T CONTROL MULIT-MILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRIES. SAID THIS ISSUE WOULD RECEIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION BY HIS NEW GOVERNMENT BUT GAVE NO INDICATION OF POSSIBLE MEASURES THAT WOULD BE EMPLOYED.
-- SPOKE CALMLY ABOUT LABEL OF "TERRORIST" USED IN WORLD PRESS ABOUT HIM. DREW SHARP DISTINCTION BETWEEN ACTIVITIES OF IRGUN AND THE PLO. WHEREAS IRGUN HAD FOUGHT BRITISH SOLDIERS, THEY HAD MADE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP WOMEN AND CHILDREN OUT OF CONFLICT. PALESTINIANS SPECIFICALLY TRAIN GUERRILLA FIGHTERS TO STRIKE AT ISRAELI CIVILIAN TARGETS.
--CONCERNED ABOUT INCREASED USE OF DRUGS IN ISRAELI SECULAR SCHOOLS, WHILE THERE WAS NOT ONE INSTANCE OF DRUG USAGE IN THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS. THIS LED TO DISCUSSION OF HIS INTEREST IN MORE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE EDUCATION
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 TEL AV 03614 02 OF 02 231408Z

SYSTEM, AND HIS INTENTION TO GIVE MIN EDUCATION TO NRP. BUT HE STRESSED THAT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SHOULD NOT BE IMPOSED ON CHILDREN OF FAMILIES WHO DID NOT WISH IT.
LEWIS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, CABINET, ELECTION RESULTS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TELAV03614
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770183-0327
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770526/aaaaawrs.tel
Line Count: 314
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0a9dbf8b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13-Apr-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2400596
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BEGIN\'S VIEWS ON THE ELECTION, THEN NEW GOVERNMENT, AND RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. SUMMARY: DURING A THREE HOUR DISCUSSION OVER LUNC
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS, (BEGIN, MENAHEM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0a9dbf8b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009